

New youth board looking for more worthy projects

By Brenda Erdahl

Annandale's Youth as Resources group handed out its first grant this fall and now the students are looking for more worthy projects.

Last January the youth run group received \$15,000 from the Initiative Foundation in Little Falls to disperse to youth run community projects as it sees fit.

The mission, according to adviser Chris Runke, is to choose projects that affect as many youth in the community as possible.

In October, the Annandale Middle School student council asked the group for help to take a bus load of middle schoolers to St. Augusta to tour the haunted house there as a Halloween treat.

"I have to give a lot of credit to the student council," Runke said.

"We gave them a grant application, they submitted it, then came to a YAR meeting to present their case."

The 12 students who make up YAR voted and approved a \$262 grant to pay for the bus. They also volunteered to provide scholarships for any student who wanted to go but couldn't afford the ticket.

They gave out an additional \$42 for six or seven scholarships.

The project positively affected 80 students, Runke said.

Youth as Resources was created by the Initiative Foundation to teach kids to become effective leaders and decision-makers in their community.

The group is composed of youth from 18 or 19 years old down to stu-

dents in the seventh grade. A group of five adults oversees the board, but it is up to the kids to make the decisions.

Since January, the group has been working on creating a grant application process and getting its name out to area organizations.

The idea is to provide a local source where youths can go to request money for community projects.

The only rule is that the project has to be youth-led and has to benefit the community. A youth is defined as anyone between the ages of 5 and 21.

"It's taken a little longer to get the wheels turning, but the board has been working together and is in a position now that they are ready for grant applications," Runke said.

He encourages youth organizations in particular to apply.

"For example, if the Boy Scouts want to have a community cleanup day, we can sponsor supplies like rakes and shovels," he said.

YAR is encouraging student councils and other groups like Target and Key Club to come to them for money for dances or lock-ins after a game.

The YAR board will give money to individuals as well, but they have to have the backing of an organization to manage the grant money. That might be a club or a church youth group.

The AMS student council had the backing of Youth First when it applied for a grant to fund the Hal-

loween trip.

"We had one other applicant besides the student council, but their project didn't fit our mission," Runke said.

A Christian athletics organization is working on a grant application, and there are several other groups that have requested the paperwork as

well.

YAR received an initial \$7,500 from the Initiative Foundation and got another \$7,500 later in the year to fund projects.

Every year the amount will decrease until Youth as Resources is completely independent, using its own money through its own fundraising.

The Annandale group has done little fundraising so far because it still has a lot of money left.

There is some worry that the Initiative Fund will take the money back if YAR can't find anyone to give it to, but it's a small worry.

According to Runke, the IF grant was originally good for a year, but not a strict year.

If the YAR group dissolves or it just can't find anybody to give the money to, then it goes back to the Initiative Foundation.

But as long as the students are making an effort to give it out, they will be able to keep the money, he said.

"I think the kids on the board are having fun. They know they are making a difference and they are making all the decisions. That's the fun part for them," Runke said.

"They are realizing that this is what it is like out in the business world. It's a lot of work, but there are a lot of benefits as well."